

## Star Wars

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#### Manifesto My Foot

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A trio of privates in the Cularin Militia offer their interpretation of Reidi Artom's recently discovered "expansion manifesto." The general feeling of these grunts: She may have been a great explorer, but she didn't know much about war. Check it out in our latest supplement to the Living Force campaign! This article contains potential spoilers of events in the Living Force "Night Eyes" trilogy. Please don't read any further until you've played that trilogy. If you choose to read this article anyway, the campaign staff asks that you please keep your player knowledge separate from your hero's knowledge.

A few weeks ago, the Tarasin came forward with the location of a hidden cache of treasures -- in the form of information -- left behind by Reidi Artom over two centuries ago. Among these treasures (which continue to be explored by xenobiologists, sociologists, and various other academics) was a document that was published immediately, at the behest of Mother Kasslan of the Vriisan irstat. In that document, Reidi Artom outlined a number of elements of her philosophy, both as it relates to expansion as a whole, and also as it relates to war.

Different portions of the manifesto have evoked different reactions among the people of Cularin, but perhaps the most contentious of her statements have to do with war. Artom wrote the following:

It's a curious thing we sentients do -- we pick a sector of space that "belongs" to no one (or if it does come close to belonging to anyone, it's someone who was here eons ago, before we even considered coming here), and argue most vociferously over who controls it.

We often call this "war."

I don't suppose I need to proselytize about the evils of war. People die, the survivors live off anger and hate and a dozen other harmful emotions, and the galaxy changes, if at all, for the worse. No one wins.

Given the current state of affairs in Cularin, it is not surprising that a number of individuals have taken issue with this statement. Notably absent from the discussion have been opinions from Osten Dal'Nay or Broof Yurdel, commanders of the Cularin Militia. Early this morning, a trio of young individuals made their way to the offices of Cularin Central Broadcasting and requested an interview with Yara Grugara. While they have asked not to be named, these three males -- a Human who asked to be called "Mack," a Cerean who identified himself as "Pac," and a Trandoshan who insisted we refer to him

as "Grunt" - - are now ready to talk to Yara about their opinions on what Reidi Artom had to say. We have granted this interview because all three possess credentials that name them as privates in the Cularin Militia.

Fade in. Yara sits on one side of a broad, sparse stage. Her side is well lit, and she's trying her best to smile while continuing to look very serious. It's obviously pretty tough on her. The opposite side of the stage is not at all well lit, and we see three shapes seated in chairs. On the far left is a body with a very clearly Cerean head, to his left is a Human, and on the far right is a Trandoshan.

Yara: Mack, Pac, and Grunt. Three of Cularin's finest. Members of our Militia, defenders of our homes. Here today, with Yara, to anonymously dispute claims made by a great woman who's no longer alive to defend herself. Welcome, gentlemen.

Mack: Thanks. I think.

Yara: Let's get right down to business, shall we? Yara understands that the three of you would like to say something about the recently re-discovered expansion manifesto written by the great Reidi Artom, who, by the time she reached Cularin, had already visited twice the number of star systems most of us will see in a lifetime. Oh, and that you speak on behalf of the Cularin Militia.

Pac: Yara, if I may? I'm already noticing a pattern in your questions - - or rather, in your statements. Twice, you've referred to Reidi Artom as "great." We don't dispute that she was a very important person, or that without her, Cularin might not be what it is. You also seem to intimate that we are here to attack her in some form, when that is most certainly not the case.

Grunt: 'Cept for when she's wrong. Then she's pretty dumb.

Pac: Do be quiet.

Grunt: Sorry.

Pac: Where was I?

Yara: You were about to confirm for me that you're here to provide the Militia's perspective on what Reidi Artom had to say about expansion and war.

Mack: Not so much about expansion. See, most of that seemed okay to me. I mean, I only read that part of it once, so I guess it was okay.

Pac: Her opinions on expansion are largely irrelevant, as is her belief that war is a result of "fads." I'm not sure where she devised such a theory, but I find it bizarre in the extreme. War is the result of conflict, whether that conflict is natural or unnatural, and that conflict's unwanted escalation into violence. And I would like to add that we do not speak for the Militia as a whole. We speak for ourselves, as representatives of the Militia.

Yara: But since no one else from the Militia has spoken, that means you speak for the Militia as a whole - - doesn't it?

Grunt: Yeah. But only 'cause we're right.

Pac: I asked you once to be quiet. Please don't make me ask you again.

Grunt: Okay, don't ask. Can I talk about why Artom's dumb now?

Pac stands up, walks to the Trandoshan, and smacks him on top of the head. He then returns to his seat.

Grunt: Guess that's a "no."

Yara: So, the position of the Cularin Militia is that Reidi Artom was dumb.

Grunt: Yup.

Pac: Mack, smack him.

Mack backhands Grunt.

Grunt: Ow.

Pac: No, that's not the Militia's position at all. That's Grunt's position, but you must understand that Grunt is rather extreme in his perspective. He enjoys fighting with things. But he's not completely unrepresentative of the Militia, so he's here. Neither am I completely unrepresentative, nor is Mack. There is a great diversity of opinion within the Cularin Militia, and if you believe that any one of us speaks the literal "truth" of the Militia's opinion, you would be mistaken.

Yara: Right. So, Yara's a little confused. It's not the case that the Militia thinks the pending war with Thaere is a good thing?

Mack: Pending? You fuzzy-tailed little sand panther, you're the one who's been reporting the news! We're at war. Most of it's still out in space, or away from the civilian centers, but it's war all right. And of course the Militia thinks it's a good idea. If we didn't, we wouldn't be fighting!

Yara: So you do speak for the Militia as a whole, then.

Pac (resigned): Yes, I suppose. But only on that.

Grunt: Thaere bad. Can I say that? Thaere really bad.

Pac: Yes. That's fine.

Yara: I think we should get to the meat of this discussion, gentlemen.

Grunt: Meat? Mmm... meat.

Mack smacks Grunt. Grunt sighs.

Grunt: Thaere bad.

Yara: What in the manifesto do you find objectionable enough to come down here and request an interview on the network?

Mack: She never fought a war. I mean, all due respect, but she was good at exploring. She wasn't a warrior, so there's no way she could understand. War's a lot more complicated than what she made it out to be.

Yara: Specifically?

Mack: Like, she said there aren't any winners in war. But there are winners and losers about war as a whole, you know? Say you're standing outside a cantina and there's this guy who's hopped up on spice and Rodian ale and he wants to fight. Now, you don't have to fight, right? But if you do fight, by her logic, there's nobody who wins, because it's just violence. Say you don't fight, and the other guy, he just comes over and starts pounding on your face. If you don't fight, and he beats the goo out of you, he wins and you lose. There's a winner if somebody wants to fight and somebody else doesn't, and the winner's always the person who fights.

Yara: Some would claim that the person who didn't fight won the moral battle.

Pac: Moral battles hardly matter when losing means that one ends up a slave, or dead.

Mack: Yeah. What he said.

Grunt: Thaere bad.

Yara: So war is justified if someone else is attacking you.

Mack: Sure. I guess you could say that war for the sake of war is wrong, but who does that? You wouldn't catch Commander Dal'Nay or Commander Yurdel saying we should have war for no reason. You'd have to be pretty dumb to want war just because you can have it.

Yara: Interesting. What do you think about Artom's statement - - let me quote this to make sure I have it right - - that "the right to 'claim' a particular place is not a function of military power." That it's more a function of who was there first. Thoughts?

Pac: Na?ve.

Mack: Unrealistic.

Grunt: Dumb.

Mack tries to smack Grunt, who catches his hand and puts it very gently back on the arm of Mack's chair.

Grunt (low, emphatic): Dumb.

Yara: Right. Any of you want to spend more than a single word - - or the same word, repeated twice - - addressing this question?

Pac: I think the word "na?ve" sums it up fairly well. She speaks as though there is an original species for every place in the galaxy, and that species should be given primacy in determining who does and does not have a right to be in a place. Her language implies that there is sometimes - - perhaps not always - - a symbiotic relationship between a species and a place, and that this relationship should be respected by people who carry really big guns. But here's a news flash: People with really big guns don't care about symbiotic relationships and indigenous peoples. They don't care if someone was here before them. That's why we call them "invaders" - - because they come in somewhere they weren't invited and take it over. I speak for no one but myself, but I don't like war, and I signed up for the Militia to prevent war from happening, or, if it did happen, to be available to help defend my system. I don't like going to war, but I'll do it.

Yara: I think that's a good question to end on. Mack, Grunt - - we know why Pac signed up. What about you?

Mack: To defend Cularin. It's my home. I never liked Thaere, never trusted them, always thought they had some kind of plan we didn't know about. Looks like we were right. Of course, if you'd given me the chance, I'd've invaded them first. Take out Burnout, maybe some of their other stations. But that's not how it happened.

Yara: Interesting. Grunt?

Grunt looks at Pac, then Mack. He sighs.

Grunt: Thaere bad.

Yara: Right, that's what I thought. This is Yara Grugara, signing off, with special thanks to these anonymous representatives of the Cularin Militia for providing a counterpoint to a brilliant woman's insightful analysis of the horror of war. Good night, Cularin.

Fade out.